

REMARKS

Claims 28-29 are allowed, and claims 1, 2, 4-5, 19, 21-30, 32 and 36 are pending. Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 5, 7, 8, 10-12, 18, 21, 26, 27 and 30. By this Amendment, allowable claims 7 and 18 are canceled, and the subject matter of claims 7 and 18 are incorporated into claims 2 and 1, respectively. Also, claims 6, 14-16, 34-35, and 37-38 are canceled. Claims 4 and 9 are amended to correct their dependency, and claim 19 is amended to correct an informality. Reconsideration in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; (d) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (e) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

A. The Office Action rejects claims 1-2, 32 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,945,972 to Okumura et al. (Okumura).

Claim 1 is amended to include features of allowable claim 18, and claim 2 is amended to include the features of allowable claim 7 and all intervening claims. Accordingly, claims 1 and 2 are allowable.

Claims 32 and 36 are allowable at least for their dependence on an allowable base claim, as well as for the additional features they recite.

As such, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of this rejection.

B. The Office Action rejects claims 13 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Okumura in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,515,068 to Uragami et al. (Uragami). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 13 are allowable at least for its dependence on an allowable base claim, as well as for the additional features it recites. Claim 37 is canceled by this Amendment without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

As such, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of this rejection.

C. The Office Action rejects claims 4 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Okumura and Uragami, further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,384,806 to Matsueda et al. (Matsueda). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 4 is also allowable at least for its dependence on claim 2, as well as for the additional features it recites. Claim 6 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein and incorporated into claim 2. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

D. The Office Action rejects claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Okumura, Uragami and Matsueda, further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,973,456 to Osada et al. (Osada). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 9 is allowable at least for its dependence on base claim 2. As such, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

E. The Office Action rejects claims 14-16 and 38 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Okumura in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,518,941 to Kimura. Claims 14-16 and 38 are canceled by this Amendment without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Accordingly, this rejection is moot.

Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

F. The Office Action rejects claims 19, 22-25 and 34-35 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Okumura, further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,583,777 to Hebiguchi et al. (Hebiguchi) and U.S. Patent No. 6,278,428 to Smith. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 19 and 22-25 are allowable at least for their dependence on claim 1, as well as for the additional features they recite.

Claims 34 and 35 are canceled by this Amendment without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Therefore, the rejection of claims 34 and 35 is moot.

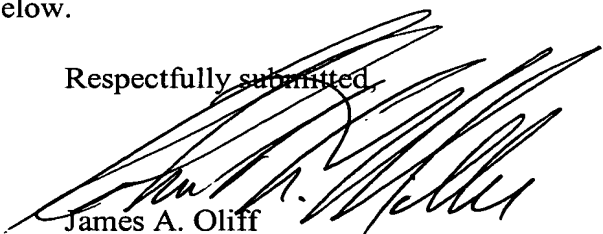
At least for these reasons, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of this rejection.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Prompt allowance of claims 1, 2, 4-5, 8-13, 19, 21-30, 32 and 36 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,


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